(c) if so, the details of financial allocation and utilisation of funds during the last three years as well as work undertaken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRI JAGMOHAN): (a) Yes, Sir. The Indian Oil Foundation has signed an MoU with the Archaeological Survey of India under the National Culture Fund for funding the conservation and development of this monument complex.

(b) and (c) UNESCO had released US $ 37,000 for the scientific investigations on the Sun Temple, Konark. Out of this sum, the Central Building Research Institute (CBRI) Roorkee conducted studies on soil investigations, stone core sampling, geo-radar studies etc. at a cost of Rs. 10.00 lakhs.

Fashion shows

4364. PROF. M.M. AGARWAL: Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state the details of specific reasons for not taking any effective and necessary steps to stop women's fashion shows being organised in the different parts of the country keeping in view the Indian culture?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRI JAGMOHAN): The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Reduction of tourism tax

4365. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether a research conducted by World Travel and Tourism Council has revealed that tax paid by tourists in India is around 40 per cent which is highest in the World;

(b) if so, whether India can attract more tourists by reducing tax;

(c) whether Government would reduce the tax; and

(d) the other details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRI JAGMOHAN): (a) No, Sir. However, in a Status Paper of the World Travel and Tourism Council they have recommended that both Central and State Governments should evolve a taxation regime which yields revenue but is not unduly harsh.

(b) Rationalisation of the taxes on services in the Tourism Sector would make India, Price-wise, a more competitive destination.

(c) and (d) The matter regarding rationalisation of taxes has been taken up by the Department of Tourism at various fora as a result of which the following concessions have been granted in the Budget for the year 2002-2003:

- Exemption of Air Travel Tax on air travel from and to North-East, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep and Leh.
- Service tax exemption given earlier to be extended for one more year: In cases of functions and banquets where the entire bill is for catering services no service tax would be charged.
- Expenditure tax on hotels henceforth to apply only to room charges: Earlier expenditure tax was charged on room charges as well as other services.
- Threshold of Rs. 2000 raised to Rs. 3000 for levy of expenditure tax.
- Disparities between Section 80 HHC and 80 HHD removed: (Under Section 80 HHC the exemption is for 100 per cent of the total foreign exchange earnings. But the hotels under 80 HHD it was 50 per cent and the balance 50 per cent was exempted if it was kept in a reserve and used for specified purposes. Now this disparity stands removed.); Also the phasing out of the benefits was inferior for hotels industry as compared to other exporter units under 80 HHC.
- Deduction of 50 per cent of profits earned by units setting up convention centres will be allowed for 5 years under Section 80-IB: This will help in those entrepreneurs who are setting up new convention centres.
- Customs Duty on imported liquor reduced from 210 per cent to 182 per cent .
- TDS under Section 194 H reduced from 10 per cent to 5 per cent: This would benefit the hotels as well as travel and tour operators.
- The need for rationalisation of taxes levied by the State Governments have also been taken up with them through the Inter State Council and other fora.